

RUTABAGAS--AN UNCOMMON TREAT

Includes Recipe Below

Rutabagas are often thought of as yellow turnips but actually bear the botanical name *Brassica napus* and belong to the highly prized family of cruciferous vegetables. The rutabaga, a relatively newcomer in the world of vegetables, is thought to have evolved from a cross between a wild cabbage and a turnip. The earliest records of rutabaga's existence are from the seventeenth century in Southern Europe where they were first eaten as well as used for animal fodder. It's curious that throughout history animals were often fed the healthiest foods, foods thought to be inappropriate for human consumption.

Because rutabagas thrive best in colder climates, they became popular in Scandinavia, but especially in Sweden, the country that earned them the name "swedes." In Europe, rutabagas are still called swedes. In America, rutabagas were first cultivated in the northern parts of the country in the early 1800s. Canada and the northern states are today's greatest producers of the rutabaga.

The rutabaga is a root vegetable that looks very much like a turnip with yellow-orange flesh and ridges at its neck. Although this beta carotene-rich vegetable has been grown and marketed in our country for nearly 200 years, it remains an uncommon food in American dining. It's actually a great tasting vegetable with a delicate sweetness and flavor that hints of the light freshness of cabbage and turnip. With its easy preparation and versatility, great nutrition, and excellent flavor, the rutabaga can easily become an endearing family favorite.



Because rutabagas store so well, up to one month in the refrigerator and up to four months in commercial storage at 32 degrees, they are available year round. Planted in May and June, they're harvested in late summer and early fall when their flavor is at its peak. Ideally, it's best to shop for fresh rutabagas at farmer's markets in early autumn.

Rutabaga Nutrition

100 grams or 3 1/2 ounces

Nutrient	Cooked	Raw
Calories	39	36
Protein	1.3 g	1.2 g
Total Fat	.6 g	.6 g
% Calories from fat	5.1%	5.0%
Carbohydrates	8.7 g	8.1 g
Fiber	1.8 g	2.5 g
Calcium	48.0 mg	47.0 mg
Copper	.04 mg	.04 mg
Iron	53 mg	.52 mg
Magnesium	23.0 mg	23.0 mg
Manganese	.17 mg	.17 mg
Phosphorous	.57 mg	.58 mg
Potassium	326.0 mg	337.0 mg
Selenium	.7 mg	.7 mg
Sodium	20.0 mg	20.0 mg
Zinc	.350 mg	.340 mg
Vitamin A	561.0 IU	580.0 IU
Vitamin B1 Thiamine	.082 mg	.090 mg
Vitamin B2 Riboflavin	.041 mg	.040 mg
Vitamin B3 Niacin	.72 mg	.7 mg
Vitamin B6 Pyridoxine	.102 mg	.100 mg
Vitamin C	18.8 mg	25.0 mg
Vitamin E	.15 mg	.30 mg
Folate (folic acid)	.15 mcg	.21 mcg
Pantothenic Acid	.155 mg	.160 mg
Saturated Fat	.03 g	.03 g
Monounsaturated Fat	.07 g	.07 g
Polyunsaturated Fat	.04 g	.04 g

Preparing Rutabagas

There are at least 100 ways to enjoy rutabagas. Here are a just few suggestions to introduce this wonderful vegetable:

RAW: First, peel them with a vegetable peeler. Slice and enjoy as a snack. Chop, dice, or grate them and add to salads. Create a unique salad with diced rutabagas and other vegetables of your choice. Grate them and add to cole slaw. Grate and combine with carrot salad.

COOKED: Rutabagas can be roasted, boiled, steamed, stir-fried, mashed, or stewed. Cook them with potatoes and mash together. Quarter them and roast along with potatoes. Enhance the flavor of stews with chopped or quartered rutabagas. Dice them and add to soups. Stir-fry with onions.

Today's busy lifestyle often makes us seek out healthy recipes that fall into that easy-to-prepare category. Here's a rutabaga winner.

RUTABAGAS IN THE ROUGH

4 large rutabagas

1/4 t. salt

Water

1 T. extra-virgin olive oil

Dash of nutmeg

Salt and pepper to taste

1. Peel rutabagas with a vegetable peeler, and cut into chunks. Put them into a 4-quart (4 liter) saucepan, add the salt and about 2" (5 cm) of water to cover. Cover saucepan, and bring to a boil over high heat.
2. Turn heat down to medium and cook about 12 - 15 minutes, or until fork tender. Drain, reserving cooking liquid. Using a potato masher, coarsely mash rutabagas in the saucepan, adding cooking liquid as needed for moisture.
3. Add olive oil and nutmeg. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Transfer to a serving bowl, sprinkle with a dash of nutmeg, and garnish with a sprig of fresh sage or herb of your choice. Serves 6.